

“A Relentlessly Productive Venue”: Interview with Senior Editor, Tani Barlow

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Question: Practically speaking, how did you found the journal?

Barlow: One day I got a phone call from Ted Hutters at UCLA who told me that he had just had lunch with Andreas Huysens, editor of *New German Critique*, and Ted said, “Oh my God, they have their own journal.” The probable reason Ted called me rather than someone else had to do with an editorial job I’d done at *Modern Chinese Literature* (now *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*); the founding editor of MCL had asked me to guest edit their first issue devoted to questions of feminism, women’s literature, and what would become known as gender. The issue featured the work of many junior scholars like me, including an interview I had commissioned asking major Chinese writers their position on the gender issue. I had that experience because I was known to be not afraid of feminism or feminists.

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Also I had been deeply influenced in these years by the theoretical journals *mf* and *Screen*.

Ted proposed that he and I should immediately “take over” MCL, but the then editor had been my teacher and I felt reluctant so I blurted out, “Why don’t we found one of our own.” Ted agreed that this was a splendid idea and the time was right. Those of us involved in intellectual history or literary studies were riding high in the Chinese Cultural Fever era and would be engaged in the reaction after the tragedies of 1989. I will address these general political circumstances a bit later. Suffice to say that as a cohort we constituted a Left critical wing inside the bastion of conventional and at that time stone-cold Cold War area studies. We hung up and then I called him back and said, “Do you want to be involved in founding the journal?” And he chuckled and said, “Absolutely not.” No doubt the thought that a journal would actually be forthcoming seemed funny at the time.

I immediately enlisted Donald Lowe, my life partner, and reached out to other junior scholars that I was meeting like Jing Wang, James Hevia, Judith Farquhar, Angela Zito, Miriam Silverberg, Ann Anagnost, Chungmoo Choi, Yukiko Hanawa, Mellie Ivy, Tom Lamarre, Jim Fujii, and so on. Everywhere I turned scholars working in East Asian studies wanted very much to be involved in a critical journal that would allow us to publish our most demanding work. Things happened quickly in my recollection. Jim Hevia reconnected with his old friend Ken Wissoker who was just leaving the University of Chicago Co-op Bookstore to become an acquisitions editor at Duke Press. Through Ken we floated the idea of the journal to the press and incredibly the journals division acquired us.

I had already linked up with the journals division editor at University of California Press (I was teaching at San Francisco State University then) and also spent a number of hours with Jeffrey Escoffier, who had served as the chief editor of *Socialist Review* (SR) during the period Donald Lowe served on the SR collective, and Howard Goldblatt who had founded the small press journal *Modern Chinese Literature* in his home. Later, in 1994 at a conference that Carol Breckenridge and Arjun Appadurai organized, “Internationalizing Cultural Studies,” at the East West Center at the University of Hawaii, I met Dilip Gaonkar, Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Sanjung Kang, and others involved in disseminating the new criticism through small press

projects. Through these and other editors I learned a lot about literary and intellectual editorial work including things like "be sure to count" to assure gender balance, mix of sexualities, ethnicities, and national origins on any governing body; be punctual and practical; how to organize production; to be delicate and decisive with the writing of others; and the mysteries of why journals are a perennial beacon for intensely focused theoretical work.

Once it looked like the journal would become a reality, I co-organized the "After Orientalism" workshop at UCB [University of California, Berkeley] with Lydia Liu, then at Berkeley. My rationale was twofold, first to bring together a cohort committed to the work of the new critical journal and second, to ensure that the journal would have high-quality essays for at least its first two years because getting started, I had learned, would be difficult in the absence of a pool of manuscripts. The organization of the workshop formed the structure of the first two years' special issues and helped as a magnet to attract innovative work, which began fitfully coming into my home office that year. It was Lydia Liu who named the journal *positions*; she may or may not recall this fact.

The intellectual political stakes of the workshop were to set the agenda for colonial studies of East Asia. As a cohort we had been influenced not only by the Left intellectuals at *Bulletin of Concerned Asia Scholars* (BCAS), the antiwar movement, various nationalist communisms from Asian countries, but also the Marxist scholarship of the Subaltern Studies Group. Their position, that the universality of class formation could be argued from the position of a jute factory worker in Calcutta, for instance, had resonance with our theoretical projects. At this point subaltern studies had not been commodified or stripped of its initial Marxism; it was not yet "postcolonial," in other words. A growing concern with Japanese empire studies and the obvious flaws of Chinese modernization historiography (which could not even account for the colonization of the educated class in treaty port societies) came to a head at "After Orientalism."

Interestingly, the workshop got as much critical attention as the journal. In some communities of scholarship it was considered bad form to posit an "after" to Orientalism, since Said himself had not in fact determined an end or had not allowed for any external or internal limits to the event of Orientalism. Orientalism was for some scholars akin to modernity itself

and therefore not ever over. My perception was rather that following the critique of Orientalism, there had to be a way of doing scholarship that took into account the disciplinary rigor of Orientalist thinking and dedicated itself to supplanting or displacing these mental and institutional habits. It was not, in other words, a periodization claim but a scholarly question: how does one displace habits following a trenchant and definitive critique of them? Are we condemned to put Orientalism on parade year after year? In light of the widespread conventions of the Orientalist view, how could a better style of scholarship emerge out of the critique? One of the planks of the statement of purpose, that we call into question ourselves as scholars as much as the societies that we study, is intimately linked to this question of what happens after the *critique* of Orientalism. And what sort of scholarship should ensue.

In the days following the workshop we met to establish the journal and make initial decisions about special issue titles that would draw on the papers and discussions. The one grain of sand at that time in the smooth flow of the founding was an angry outburst from Professor Masao Miyoshi, who accused the journal project of being “counter revolutionary” and “funded from dubious sources.” Until we began drafting the statement of purpose for the journal, our own collaborative interactions had been unusually pacific. The founding statements caused a giant fight, over what I do not recall, which led to the resignation of several scholars, but for the most part the statement expressed well the moment of its forging and the strong commitments of its signatories.

Russo: How did you and Donald evaluate the 1989 events both in China and in Eastern Europe in the process of creation of the journal? The journal has marked a deep break with the ideological atmosphere of the Cold War. Our personal enthusiasm for the journal from the beginning was that we shared the vision of an intellectual space for a critical scholarship on Asia starting from a critical attitude on the ideological and political effects of the end of the Cold War.

Barlow: Our positioning in relation to the events of the Cold War resolution, I think it is fair to say, had been influenced by the year we spent as foreign experts in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) during 1980–81 and the

book we wrote about our experience, *Teaching China's Lost Generation*. For me, meeting my peers and teaching in classrooms where "students" [were] of my own age and facility with abstraction meant that our encounters had a contestatory flavor that transformed my view of Chinese intellectuals. They were angry. Many had spent years away from urban areas working in menial jobs. They had tested into the university system, and I taught the class of 1979 primarily, who were juniors in the English department. With a few notable exceptions they were Rightists or ultra Leftists, bitter and irate that their lives had been so obviously shaped around bad state politics. We argued with them. We had both participated in local Bay Area cultural revolutionary activities and had been marked by the cultural revolution of our own place and time. While we and the students tended to share broad principles of justice, equality, service, class consciousness, we upheld a kind of loyalist relation to the state even as we learned how catastrophic the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) had been to our students and our family. Their personal experience had an uncontestable legitimacy, and Don and I both had to accommodate, evaluate, and learn. The obvious and painful fact we confronted, as did so many on the Left in those days, was coming to grips with the realities of the catastrophic Chinese Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. While we struggled for several years after that experience, we did not become reactionaries.

US post-Cold War triumphalism posed another severe threat to progressives globally, including us. In the United States particularly, a regressive move of depoliticization had begun with the end of the Cold War. I remember Marilyn Young asking me to ask Donald what he thought about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). His answer was something along the lines of what do I think about an iceberg: meaning that taking positions against a world historical event is a moral question and not a strategic one. Ronald Reagan and George Bush Sr. politically eroded the viability of popular progressivism; the pejorative of "liberal" supplanted Left or Socialist, which became as taboo in this era as Communist. However, in the areas of Asia study during the seventies and eighties a strong interest in social revolution had emerged as an offshoot of the struggle to end the Asia wars. Interest in peasant revolution, women's liberation, theories of cultural revolution, cultural critique of US neocolonial holdings in Japan (a

preoccupation with AMPO) [*Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security*] and Korea had captured our interests as a student cohort. For many of us, reversing the Cold War dogma that held the Chinese Revolution to be irrational meant writing dissertations that detailed strategy, intellectual work, the content of ideas about social change, and the struggles themselves as dissertation topics.

At the end of the 1980s, more or less Social Democrats at that point, Don and I both felt massive disappointment, mixed with relief, as the authoritarian state structures in Eastern Europe and in China gave way to fleeting popular democracies and collapsed or, in the case of the PRC adopted a state policy of neoliberalization. I don't recall that either Don or I ever had any illusions about the post-Cold War order. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant the end of a corrupted regime but it also seemed so obvious that American ascendancy would go hand in hand with the wholesale discrediting of all socialist possibilities. I recall joking around a lot about how now we would never have a party we could join due to the gross capitalist reterritorialization of the so-called postsocialist world. This was a deeply disappointing time. East Asia scholarship faced a crisis because collapse of the old Cold War dualism meant it became difficult to ground progressive politics in actually existing state policies or institutions. And this fact needs to be underlined because it helps to explain the mission that the initial *positions* group took so seriously.

As important as the anti-Cold War posture was to us, I think all of us had a presentiment that the post-Cold War order would indubitably suffer from a lack of affirmative styles of critical scholarship. That insight was the primary justification for founding a journal in the midst of the collapse of socialist and communist states, the discrediting of US policy-focused area studies, and the defunding of Cold War universities.

It is one thing to organize around an abolitionary objective—ending Cold War Asia scholarship—but it is another project altogether to create a visionary and stable set of practices that would enable a highly politicized and deeply learned style of thinking. There were almost no guidelines in a suddenly vacated contest. For instance, I wrote a breathtakingly rude criticism of Cold War historiography, which was also a brief for engaging in colonial studies of East Asia. Critique had not been a particularly viable

expressive mode in area studies as a form of scholarship, since the expectation had been that scholars of China, Japan, and Korea were supposed to collect data on the said countries for others to process, refine, and analyze. We were not encouraged and were even actively discouraged to engage in critique or bother with questions regarding the philosophy of history or narrativity in history writing. But beyond the taboo structures of the fields of those times, the project of affirming what a post-Cold War studies would be pressed on all of us. I believe that the great achievement of the journal has been to open a relentlessly productive venue of experimentation in which alternate forms of scholarship have developed over two decades.

It is important to point out that younger intellectuals who joined in the restructuring of Asia studies during those years saw the "end" of the Cold War as a great opportunity to supplant old ideas. Breaking with Cold War historiography had begun in the antiwar generation of our immediate seniors. Ted Hutters is an excellent example of the kind of people I admired. Mark Selden, Joseph Esherick, Marilyn Young, Sandi Sturdevant, Jim Peck, Bruce Cummings were all associated with the anti-Vietnam War initiatives inside Cold War Asia studies, and we felt strongly that they were our avatars and allies. In some respects we modeled ourselves in relation to them and the perceived ending of the Cold War as they had engaged in the struggle against the Vietnam war in Asia. We assumed as a cohort that the time had arrived to break out of the Cold War model. Since we either came from Left families, as I and as many of my PRC-born colleagues had, or studied with Left scholars, the only participant in the founding *positions* coalition who did not identify as a Leftist was soon marginalized. One could easily say that the founding scholars continued the Left tradition of Asia scholarship with an increased emphasis on conceptualization and on diverse sites of political contestation. We hesitated before a void. We stood, as [Walter] Benjamin put it in his manifesto for the journal *Angelus Novus*, in a relation of "mutual alienness" in regard to the questions we posed and the itineraries we followed but followed in the footsteps of the Left traditions.

The question at that time was how our own consciousness and scholarship had become enmeshed or complicit with the larger policy objectives that Cold War theories — modernization, democratization, rational choice theories, civilizationalist theories of the Confucianist great ideas, the dogma

that China was governed by ritual rather than law and its attendant thesis that the old civilizations were absent [of] modern social structures of universality, juridical law, abstract norms of equality, and so forth. The focus on “self-criticism” came through our perceived need to be harshly aware of how our own education had solidified Cold War truisms, but it also reflected the Maoist streak that ran through Left cultural circles in those years. From *Socialist Review* to *positions*, the focus on self-critical scholarship was an article of faith.

Pozzana: How did you evaluate the crisis in the 1980s of the critical scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s, namely of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asia Scholars* or *BCAS*?

Barlow: Here is a case in my experience of a gap between intent and impact. As *positions*' senior editor I saw a deep suspicion and hostility coming from *BCAS* intellectuals toward “culture fever” and the philosophic turn in academic scholarship. And I think no one in my acquaintance in these years felt any differently; the most senior scholars of the Masao Miyoshi generation were politically and theoretically engaged, *BCAS* was politically engaged but more inclined to publish report-style and empirical findings. *BCAS*'s posture made sense given its origin in the antiwar movement, though its strong disinclination to publish critical theory seemed off point to me. It never entered my mind that these constituencies would conceive of *positions* as hostile or threatening in any way. This is the blessed idiocy of young people. I always considered the Left intellectuals—*BCAS*, *Critical Inquiry*, the Jamesonians, the senior generation of Harootunian, *Socialist Review*—to be *positions*' natural allies. It never crossed my mind that *positions* would threaten anyone on the scholarly Left or that our appearance as a project would cause conflict.

My thoughtlessness was also steeped in my belief then that *positions*' intellectual life would only last five years. Jeffrey Escoffier had pointed out to me that journals (*Socialist Review* was then in its death throes and *Cultural Critique* was fading) were intellectually alive only for a short period before they became pointlessly routinized, a brand rather than an opportunity for contestation. To counter that five-year life span threat, I decided that guest-edited special issues might be able to keep *positions* from becoming a coterie

journal, exclusive to a bounded group. This proved a good policy. The emergence of projects exterior to the founding group and its preoccupations, the integration of specific problem orientations, the sideswiping tendency of nonaffiliated special guest editors, [and] a tradition of publishing emergent research are some of the reasons the journal has remained relatively open.

This policy and my determination to forestall the tendency of groups to exclusivity have proven a good short-term political strategy as well. Over the last two decades, the center has shifted several times. Practices roundly criticized two decades ago as "splittist" or mere "identity" projects are legitimately "political" now, broadly, across the international Left. For instance, political conflicts over whether queer politics qualified as a politics or not have been fought out if sometimes implicitly in the journal and are now an ongoing element of politicized research and publication. The call and response of identitarian claims and the critique or resolution of these claims are a part of our history. The regularity of publication — three issues a year for twenty years — has meant that earlier conflicts have given way, and allied journals, *BCAS* now *Critical Asian Studies*, *Traces*, *Inter-Asian Cultural Studies*, joined in contemporary debates and have extended the possibilities for political and scholarly risk taking. Underestimating the challenge that critical theory posed two decades ago led to a regrettable schism.

Song: What are the most popular issues in the last two decades, and how do you understand what factors help shape and condition *positions'* intellectual vision?

Barlow: We have increased access to this kind of information because Duke Press's journal division has become so efficient in the last decade. We know that in May 2010 the biggest single-issue sellers have been special issues stretching back to 2004. The top sellers this year are politically engaged special numbers or issues that are raising fresh topics. For instance the 2005 "Against Preemptive War," 2008 "War Capital Trauma," 2009 "The Cultural State of Contemporary Taiwan," and 2006 "Proletarian Arts in East Asia," all of which have sold well. Although I have no figures, I would guess "The Comfort Women" special issue from 1997 has sold more copies than any other single issue in our history. I have used it in teaching over the years and it is still being produced on demand for classroom adoption. New top-

ics such as [the] 2008 “Taking It to Heart: Emotion, Modernity, Asia,” 2004 “Intersections: Issues in Contemporary Art,” and 2005 “Alain Badiou and Cultural Revolution” have also done well.

The journals division can now also track [the] most-read essays on a yearly basis. The “10 Most Frequently Read Articles” on HighWire between June 2010 and May 2011 are as follows: Jeffrey Nunokawa, “Oscar Wilde in Japan: Aestheticism, Orientalism, and the Derealization of the Homosexual,” 1994; Emma Jinhua Teng, “Eurasian Hybridity in Chinese Utopian Visions: From ‘One World’ to ‘A Society Based on Beauty’ and Beyond,” 2006; Haiyan Lee, “Governmentality and the Aesthetic State: A Chinese Fantasia,” 2006; Tani E. Barlow, “Editor’s Introduction,” 2006; Aihwa Ong, “On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship among Chinese in Diaspora,” 1993; Hyun Sook Kim, “History and Memory: The ‘Comfort Women’ Controversy,” 1997; Susan J. Napier, “Confronting Master Narratives: History as Vision in Miyazaki Hayao’s Cinema of Deassurance,” 2001; Jesook Song, “Family Breakdown and Invisible Homeless Women: Neoliberal Governance during the Asian Debt Crisis in South Korea, 1997–2001,” 2006; Kyeyoung Park, “I’m Floating in the Air: Creation of a Korean Transnational Space among Korean-Latino American Remigrants,” 1999; Hyunah Yang, “Revisiting the Issue of Korean ‘Military Comfort Women’: The Question of Truth and Positionality,” 1997.

The original vision of the journal sought to expand allowable scholarship, and our sales have mirrored our aspirations to an amazing degree. An intellectual mission has to mesh with demand for any business, including journals, to be sufficiently profitable that they can maintain themselves. I think it is also fair to say that *positions* established the legitimacy of colonial studies for East Asia to a degree that it is no longer debatable. In general, the editorial job of the journal is to adopt forthcoming topics and nurture new scholarship into the future.

Song: If there is a tendency for special issues to be more popular in terms of sales and awards, what are the subjects and historical contexts of publication of those issues?

Barlow: *positions* has won four awards during these two decades. We won the 1995 Best New Journal Award from the Council of Editors of Learned

Societies (CELJ). Judith Farquar's guest-edited issue in 1998, "Empire of Hygiene," won the CELJ's Runner Up Best Special Issue Award, and we've won the Best Special Issue Award twice in the last three years, once for 2008 Barlow and Hammer's "Capital War Trauma" and as cowinner last year with *GLQ* for Lisa Rofel and Petrus Liu's "Beyond the Strai(gh)ts: Transnationalism and Queer Chinese Politics." Having been a judge on the CELJ jury, I found that Best New Journal is usually easy to choose. Best special issues, on [the] other hand, are more competitive because there are so many contenders and in this everything counts, from the special topic, the density and interest of the scholarship, to visual presentation and editorial style.

I cannot help but suspect, however, that we are a little bit like a performing pony, in that judges and juries still cannot believe that we are laying claim to the full range of problem orientations in the publication. The shock value of rereading trauma theory through "Asia," for instance, led one reviewer to specifically note that it had come as a surprise to him to see such a project was not only possible but had yielded such excellent results. We have remaining pedagogic challenges. Readers who would not consider *Public Culture* as a journal of South Asian studies have trouble reading *positions* as a journal of ideas. There remains an all-too-solid notion that "Asia" is a place where the universal laws do not apply and people act out on other logics. Claiming otherwise still has the power to upset intellectuals outside Asianist communities. (Yes, titling the journal "east asia cultures critique" did not help. It did, however, create a useful shelter for our scholarship to emerge.) As many other scholars have pointed out, *positions* confronted a need to "give voice" to those who like ourselves felt like round pegs in square holes, but we also eschewed the notion of "identity" altogether, either for ourselves or our subjects.

Recall that the journal gave us an outlet for expressing our own partially grasped ideological positioning in relation to journal readers more accustomed to Europe- and US-centered scholarship. No matter what sort of polemics arose among inter-Asian academics over the success of subaltern studies, the fact is the subaltern project was also a journal, a yearly that edited and published historiographic debates that, in my view, had been deeply influenced by a pervasive Maoist current among Indian academics, just as the so-called "theory" pouring in from Europe took up the question

of culture because most intellectuals there had been active in the Maoist movements of their time. Michel Foucault, Alain Badiou, and many others emerged in the context of the international Mao movements and, in the case of Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Jean-François Lyotard, Louis Althusser, and Pierre Bourdieu, the Algerian war. In retrospect it seems ludicrous that *positions* sustained attacks from ex-Maoist intellectuals working in the United States because of their perception that our work too closely mirrored the work of ex-Maoists from India. That is one way of reading the historical backdrop of early *positions* publication and the reason why people like Dipesh Chakrabarty were involved.

Maybe over the next decades the idea of an opinion journal or a scholarly journal that occupies a central position in opinion making—despite calling on international trends—will become banal. I hope so. Just as there is no reason *not* to think feminist theory through Chinese texts, or the national tradition of feminist thought in China, there is no reason to *not* think about trauma theory or universal claims of any kind through our scholarship.

Song: I'm particularly interested in knowing if you think there is any pedagogical or teaching utility at the journal's actual distribution level?

Barlow: Around the time that it became clear there would be a journal, I began visiting editors outside the United States. I met Wang Hui who had founded the journal *Scholars*, for instance, and discussed editorial and theoretical issues with him. I remember the shock of learning how large *Dushu (Reading)*'s readership was but also the differences and similarities in our mutual efforts at enlivening theoretical and scholarly debates. Also, I went to Taipei to attend a collective meeting of the famous *Taiwan: A Journal of Social Science* editorial collective at their monthly tea house meeting. I got grilled about my intentions, I remember. Somehow I also met the great scholar and editor Paik Nak-chong, who had, as I recall, been released from prison, and I established a journal exchange with *Changjakwa pippyong (Creation and Criticism)*. In 1994 I gave a talk at the "Reproducing Cultural Studies" [unit] that Carol Breckenridge and Arjun Appadurai had organized at a conference called "Internationalizing Cultural Studies" at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii, Manoa, and met journal editors from all over South Asia.

Often I had a feeling in the first few years that *positions*'s projects embodied the major debates of the times. Editing is difficult. Over the years I have learned a lot about it as a form of affective labor, a project in language arts, a domain for exercising imagination, a critical theory project. But intricate as editing is, it cannot be done against the times. It cannot happen in a vacuum.

To have launched the project at the close of the Cold War and the opening of the digital revolution is not a coincidence. This was the spirit of the time. We worked on faxes then and had only just begun to adapt work to electronic media like e-mail. This matter is implicit to the work of journals and editing but nonetheless political for all that. To invest human imagination laboriously into line editing, content editing, critical choices, the monotony of reviews, the logic of pastiche or collage that are the literary side of production (i.e., how to build a table of contents, how the contents maximize the general message of the special issue) has a politics. It is an odd practice because the editor's work is both indispensable and largely invisible, or perhaps, latent, for it is there in the open for anyone who wishes to see it.

One of our greatest hopes in the beginning concerned using the journal as a teaching tool. In fact, Jennifer Holberg, an early *positions* editorial manager at University of Washington (UW), and her crew founded a journal, also with Duke, called *Pedagogy*. She was convinced that teaching and editing had a potential for alliance, and her journal is now eleven years old. I think the sales we have for back issues is the sign that teachers use our special issues in the classroom. Certainly the online sales of single articles reflect canonization and pedagogic forces. I am disappointed that special issues do not seem to circulate as books, but I also know that teachers assign the work electronically so actual book sales are not indicative of anything.

However, it is clear from the lists of "Ten Top *positions* Essays" and from the special issue sales figures that digital media has sustained us, and forward-looking ideas have kept the journal in the spotlight. Digitization and electronic distribution of texts, displacement of the center, opening to reflexivity, and self-criticism have all supported the success of the journal.

Song: How are the intellectual vision and the practices of *positions* distinguishable from other self-proclaimed critical/Left academic journals?

Barlow: I can address this excellent question in several ways. Unlike *Traces: A Multilingual Journal of Culture Theory and Translation* established in 2001, *positions* avoided exclusivity by opening the journal to blind submission and by giving it a sufficiently flexible name that we would not be defined by “theory” or “translation” as exclusive problem orientations. We built in flexibility. Unlike *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, established in 2000, the geographic location of the editorial group and authors has never been at issue: we never sought to become an “Asian” journal, nor did we emerge out of the public intellectual’s sphere. Unlike *Post-Colonial Studies*, which is published by Routledge with editorial offices in Melbourne, Australia, we do not focus exclusively on the question of colonial and postcolonial studies. We are freer to rethink what “politics” is and is not than a journal like *Public Culture*, which had been from the start wedded to the conceptual unfolding of the ideological notion of “public cultures.” Like *Traces* and unlike other projects, we have no professional organization or endowed research center backing our work. Our emphasis on “critique” intended to position us more in relation to the Left critical small press than the professional organization newsletters like *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* or the *Journal of Asian Studies* or the *Journal of Japanese Studies*. Always, my personal touchstone has been the Marxist feminist theory journal *m/f*. In *m/f* I first saw how important distilled intellectual debate was to general scholarship. The maximally condensed theoretic language of that journal opened up a host of questions that mark my generation of scholars: What is the subject problem in theory? How is it possible to reconcile “concrete women” and Lacanian studies? How does history work in a post-Lacanian world? What constitutes the universal? And then later, in the subaltern studies yearbooks I believed I had found the proper silo for concentrating on a handful of central theoretical questions. This is what I imagined I was doing when I became senior editor of *positions*. That is not what *positions* became, of course, but the creation of a convention or work approach still fascinates me.

I think the question of how scholarship, publication, and periodicals are “political” has been problematic in the way that writers are always called to answer for ourselves. The assumption that scholarly thinking is a kind of praxis, for instance, is rarely put to the test, is rarely called upon to demonstrate its pretentious claims. What sort of demonstration is to be made, that

too is a stark naked problem. A compelling argument was made in the arc of feminist critique that some things are not "political" in a simple sense, or perhaps more correctly cannot be required to account for themselves in simply political fashions. But more importantly than keeping track of what is out of the bounds of the political (the personal, for instance, cannot be wholly politicized), it is exceedingly difficult in academic or scholarly politics to say what is being accomplished. There is a kind of quarrelsomeness of writers about what kind of political opportunities our work really offers. And in these times the question has become ever more pressing. *positions* has supported all these progressive experiments in writing and in publication. That is because journals turn out to have a long life and often change and because in a period like ours the small press option keeps alive the possibility of politicized thought. Not every issue of every year hews to an orthodoxy or already defined notion of what the political consists of, but I think this is where the openness of *positions* is accommodating. Distinguishing ourselves as a venue for debate about the political in a period of despair and disorientation does not require any definition against other journals or cohorts, only a willingness to risk and cognizance that journals are serial publications with implacable deadlines and empty, yawning spaces to fill.

A place where we have hoped to innovate and still hold out hope is the politics of art in contemporary markets. This has proven a difficult project to conceive, but our design possibilities and the work of Sue Hall, our gifted artist and designer, mean that when we figure out how and who can do this work we will be able to present it in a meaningful and pleasing way.

Zito: *positions* has a visual presence. How did the journal's aesthetic form take shape?

Barlow: When I sat down with the designer at Duke UP I had in mind something that would jump off *Public Culture*, which at the time [had] a mind-blowingly original design. I had had a dream about a squarer format with a crude block-like integrity and that is what I described to her. Sue Hall had not arrived. I cannot remember the artist's name; it is somewhere in the records. Later Sue would exploit this design to the max so I always think of it as Sue's project. I have a strong preference for imaginary writing and cryptic knowledge and intellection through implication. The syllabary

on the cover of the second issue of the journal stands as a symbol of that preference. Not translation paradigm (which I knew little about at the time) but rather the possibility of saying things in many ways. Yukiko Hanawa's special issue "Circuits of Desire" concretized what was actually just a figure of speech or a metaphor, another visual preference. I was able to do this again with the Badiou issue, because [he] drew diagrams during his early years and I asked for a copy and used it as cover art.

Chungmoo Choi was instrumental in establishing the journal's look, as has been Tom Lamarre. Chungmoo introduced a number of significant images into the cover art. "Marxist Scholarship" featured a Confucian gentleman with two sets of eyes. It was perfect for expressing the multivisionary reality of a journal, to say nothing of its covert display of hypocrisy. Journals do not say the same thing to all readers. Most readers, for instance, do not read from cover to cover; most do not understand that a good editor builds a logic into the sequence of the issue; sometimes editors play jokes on readers; and also the simple point (that probably does not come through at all) regarding our relationships [with] Marxists of the senior generation. The double eyes of the old Yi dynasty gent look out on dogma with double vision; in a way we were doing ideology critique in those days. And then there is the Andrew Jones' diagram. It was in his paper and I felt strongly it would work well for the cover, since line drawings reproduce well and this one encoded cryptic historical information. You see when you read the issue that the article is all about the disciplinization of childhood in the 1920s, so the image works both as a cryptic sign of an historical event and as a formal design.

Our history with photographs in cover art and in the journal is mixed. For the "Trauma" issue [vol. 16, no. 1] I found [a photograph] at the Henry Gallery in 2007 in An-My Lê's "Small Wars" exhibition. The show consisted of a series of staged photographs in the sense that the artist had permission to take shots of the US army doing maneuvers in Arizona and men restaging decisive Vietnam War battles in Virginia, simulating the old wars and the new ones.¹ Of course what you see is real. It just is not exactly what you think it is. For that reason and because the (fake) ordinance is so beautiful, I believe this photograph sold the ideas in the issue better than anything else could have because, like Tom Lamarre's selection of an image of the shat-

tered opera house, it is both beautiful and when you learn about its origins, speaks to the relation of war and capital; the trauma part is visceral and there is no reason to underline it.

The "look" of the journal has emerged both from necessity — three times a year we had to have a striking piece of art on the cover — and increasingly from the growth of digital media and the dropping cost of reproduction. At the beginning we could not afford art or even to include Asian language fonts because of the prohibitive costs. Now the press's ability to create gorgeous and inexpensive interior color reproductions allows us more liberty. Locating appropriate images has not been easy, and many people have participated in searching [for] and contributing images.

Sakai: How did you manage the relationship between the fields of Asian studies and those of Asian-American studies? One of the characteristics of the classical area studies on Asia was its total rejection of themes and problems to be routinely discussed in Asian-American studies. A few representative scholars of Asian-American studies were included from the beginning to the editorial collective of *positions*. This was one of the most attractive features of *positions*.

Barlow: This is a relatively difficult topic to address. There are several levels. At the personal level I had lived in San Francisco where this politics had been at work for decades. The Third World Student Strike of 1968–69, which, through the Third World Liberation Front, had linked "nationality" to "race" in the Asian-American political movements at San Francisco State University (SFSU) and Berkeley, meant that the identitarian element of the rise of Asian-American studies had a much richer international component that would appear in later decades. I was an undergraduate student at SFSU starting in 1969 and hung out with people like George Woo, Albert Wong, K. Y. Hsu, George Cheng, and although I never participated in it personally, I was aware of later student support for the International Hotel. Because that struggle involved both migrants and Asian-Americans, I assumed there was a natural political link. Also, my schooling in Chinese language began at SFSU where I was often the only Anglo student in the room, so the idea that Hong Kongers would learn Chinese standard language or present themselves as both Chinese and Chinese American was

a commonplace by virtue of the racial, ethnic, political composition of the student body then. Moreover, my partner was China born and his children were Asian-Americans, so while appreciating the profound generational gap separating them, I also had no reason to assume any foundational, psychic, intellectual conflict.

At the professional level I actually had to be taught that Asian-American studies should be derogated. I obviously was not a good student. Later, more elite universities than mine, where the identity issue was more prominent, as for instance in the well-known positions that Sau-ling Wu took at Berkeley, pioneered in the notion that Chinese American studies could not be limited to English language literature, and Colleen Lye was hired. But in my student days *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* had just been published and we all read it together, though I was even then considered to be an Asianist.

What I'm trying to say here is that there were always good models of noncontradictory relations available to me. My guiding assumption, moreover, later, at the organizational level was that the clashes of national versus ethnic among scholars with "Asian"-appearing bodies would be fought on intellectual grounds. I felt that both *positions* and the Rockefeller Foundation Grant in the Humanities, "Critical Asian Studies," which I founded with Ann Anagnost in 1995 at University of Washington, should be a part of that debate. Interestingly, Howard Goldblatt also urged me to stick to this strategy with the journal. He taught Chinese language and literature for many years at SFSU and came from a similar background as I.

It may be useful to keep in mind, as well, that in founding *positions* the emergent scholarship had a naïve quality. The journal project brought together people who either had perceived institutional deficits (consider the relation of mainstream China studies to Harvard University and John Fairbank, for instance, and notice the absence of Harvard-trained sinologists in the editorial group) or who had returned to university with real-life experiences so that as per the vets during the GI Bill era, common knowledge somehow did not constrain us. Many originated out of the theoretically advanced graduate program at University of Chicago in the 1980s where such thoughts were more easily thinkable. Moreover, this era opened the fruitless struggles over racial identifications and for Anglo, self-critical

Asianists, awareness of white privilege was a part of being open to Asian-American issues.

Sakai: You have tried to involve local scholars outside the US academia and appeal to readers in countries in East Asia, some of whom may have no knowledge about how the US academia operates. Under such circumstances, the most usual editorial tactic is to avoid offending local readers and scholarship, some of which may well be under governmental censorship. How did you manage to remain critical of the fields of national literature and history in Asian countries?

Barlow: This is an interesting and important question. I did travel in order to present the *positions* project to peers. Having taught intellectuals just like me in China in 1980, having lived in Asia early as a youngster, and so on, the issue for me was actually how I could find intellectuals, critical theorists, involved in specific projects in their own workplaces for purposes of collaboration. Because I had come face to face with actual ex-Red Guard in my own classroom, I had learned that a lively critical world existed even in conditions of censorship and that most intellectuals had exciting debates within a world of shifting political acceptability, accountability. My experience over thirty years has reconfirmed that belief. The People's Republic and GMD (Guomindang) Taiwan were exhilarating places to be when the *positions* project began to emerge.

It is also true that because *positions* articles frequently do not respect so-called boundaries — national, regional, social — and do not perceive ethnic practices as ever given or homogeneous, it may puzzle readers who assume nationality is an essence or that ethnicity is immutable. In this respect I think *positions* resembles *Traces*. Rather than being disturbed that readers may be puzzled, I marvel now at the proliferation of journals and scholarship that take on the questions of appearing homogeneity, of racialism or nationalism.

Lamarre: How has academic knowledge production changed, particularly with the onset of electronic venues of publication, and how journals have changed? I'm particularly interested in your approach to giving voice to a diverse range of politicized knowledge production.

Barlow: My impression is summed up by the very words that we now use, foremost among them “knowledge production.” I have defended the use of this word to grumpy people and I do not feel onus against it, but I do recognize that we use it in part because the production end of thinking is now prominent. In the space where “discursive community” appeared and before that “scholarly circles,” we now talk about “knowledge production” in part because scholarship has been commodified into content. This has happened at every level. We now use a program called Editorial Manager, which replaces generations of UW English department managing editors such as Brandy Parris, Riki Thompson, Jennifer Holberg who invented the administrative arm of the journal. Together we leaped from hand-edited hard copy, to soft copy and long-distance editorial work, to a boutique program that Riki Thompson wrote for the journal that stored information about each manuscript, to our current program which Meagan Williams installed and Rachel Ross currently uses. This has meant a diminution of personal contact with readers and authors. We receive fewer phone calls. The long online relationships are now shorter. Moreover, it is possible to see a standardization taking place in the writing submitted to the journal. It is hard to generalize without figures, but as the person who reads every manuscript that comes in, I would guess that one-third of the submissions are now formulaic. This is new. That is the electronic media’s impact on the production side of our work.

On the question of how journals in general have changed, I think we have not changed as much as people think, and that is because of the role editors still play. If you belong to the Council for Editors of Learned Journals you are added to the distribution list, and if you have the time you can read the worries and complaints and queries from editors. These have not changed in my experience. There are still agonistic complaints about lack of funding, uncooperative reviewers, what to do with deranged colleagues, the question of actual plagiarism, the review system, confidentiality, and so on. Now that public universities are in crisis, established journals are being destroyed in a new logic of accountability. But that crisis is not the fault of digitization.

Electronic publication actually opens up possibilities that we only dreamed about earlier. Readers internationally can access the journal. Online journals

operate much like edited volumes did in earlier times. The advanced research and interpretive work that a journal like *positions* publishes is available for all ranks of teachers to use in the classroom, and from the sales statistics it looks to me as if undergraduate classroom teaching is driving some of the preferences on the top ten list for instance. There is no question that the "Comfort Women" focus remains active because it allows teachers access to rare scholarship. Since commodified scholarship is market competitive, I also suspect that there will eventually be facsimile journals — easily available, online texts that resemble the hard copy — so that people can "read" the images, the cover, the singular fonts, the same design as the hand-held journal. Although the beauty of the design may not be *positions'* calling card anymore, new academic journals still pay attention to design, and this will eventually be reflected in our online presence.

The question of how to present a catholic range of opinion in *positions* has been uncomfortable for me personally at times. It is something I absolutely insisted on for a range of different reasons, including the fact that the Asian studies I grew up in was a closed shop. Publication depended on who was willing to stand for you. But in this process I have been personally accused of everything from stupidity to venality, criminality, antirevolutionary crimes against humanity, and so on. Much of this abuse alleged to be "political." I and those brave souls who agreed to join the project early on were subject to ill treatment over what did or did not count as "political." Several resigned over this for fear that a powerful mentor would punish them. But at no time during those early years did the hostiles ever stop and say, "So what is the political?" A differentiation of orthodoxy or discipleship from sustained, sometimes philosophic, theoretical, and scholarly debate over what constitutes "the political" is precisely one element that has come historically to distinguish this journal.

My policy of openness had a number of origins. First, since I had to get the manuscripts to the press, I knew from the start that a journal is empty and cannot wait for the perfect position, the definitive manifesto, the just-right anything: it is a media form rooted in transience and in compromise. Each year there are three and now four empty spaces, so I had no doubt that the international politics that enflamed our scholarship would spill naturally into these empty issues, and it has, year in and year out for twenty years.

That means in reality, second, that nothing about journals is definitive. Since publications like ours do not represent political parties or professional organizations, there need be no consensus on political matters. Third, what is politically pertinent at any juncture must be spelled out and debated; the debate structure has been singularly important in the life of this journal, in part because of the international composition of the advisory council, in part because the politics of scholarship, nation, and region have been unusually heated in the post-Cold War era. Fourth, in order to sustain the movement of our scholarship from information retrieval to the problem orientation and claim to the right to generalize from “Asia” to the rest of the world, theoretic and thus political divisions or hostility had to be explicitly voiced. An element that distinguishes area studies (information retrieval) from scholarship is precisely this. Fifth, because we have regional expertise and diverse origins, we came to the project with profoundly different experiences. Chungmoo Choi, for instance, came out of the Korean student movement. James Hevia was a soldier during the Vietnam War who became a peace advocate. Naoki Sakai had been a businessman. Tom LaMarre had been a biologist with several patents to his name. Finally, twenty years is a generation. Some of the negative feelings that surrounded *positions*' founding were generational. That lesson having been learned, I have scrupulously opened our pages to the emergent politics of my students' generations. Slowly we have added younger scholars onto our boards. I hope that this journal will continue to store experience and large-scale debate, for in an era of extreme depoliticization like our own, it is enraging to me that progressive scholarship is ignored or banalized and that engaged scholars are in danger of being picked off one by one. I hope this journal continues to provide a living memory of older debate.

Lamarre: Some sub-questions come to mind. For instance, how do we deal with the scale or magnitude of publication today, with the explosion of new journals and venues? What is the role of selecting and combining essays when readers tend more and more to download essays in isolation from actual journal issues? How does the organization of an issue become a mode of conceptualization? I am also thinking here of a feature of *positions* that I particularly admire and have tried to emulate in my own work as an

editor: bringing the process of reviewing closer to a kind of mentoring, in which reviewers work intensively with an essay, rather than simply giving it a thumbs up or thumbs down. It is a labor-intensive process, of course, and I am interested [in] hearing you speak about how such a process allows for a different kind of knowledge production and intellectual community.

Barlow: I don't know an answer to the first question. In the beginning we had problems getting off the ground because established journals had library subscriptions which financed their production. I compensated by winning support from the University of Washington and later Rice University, but Chris Lupke and Gi-wook Shin each stepped in with \$5,000 on years we went broke. The journal, as I wrote in "Triple Double Bind: Founding *positions*" in 1995, is a product of the new age of text production. In that essay, however, I also sought to demonstrate that editing itself is a conceptual project and requires a sophisticated understanding of the general field or scholarly world in which selections take place. I took up the question of the existing intellectual atmosphere through a series of conceptual double binds. I showed how the antagonists of that moment, Homi Bhabha and Arif Dirlik, each were attached to the other as the condition of their thinking, each cruder than the other in attacking the hostile which made their own position feasible in the first instance. My second double bind in 1995 was that governing the simultaneity and therefore an alleged causal relation of the immediate post-Cold War conditions in relation to the emergent scholarship represented in the page of the journal, which in 1995 was already three years old. The third of my double binds revolved around the irony of a centered journal publication in relation to internationalizing content in a commodified world of digital information. It moved me to reread that old essay, because on the matter of the physicality of the digitization of journals and scholarly life generally speaking, I was prescient.

With prudent decisions about special topics and the willingness of scholars to contribute time and imagination we might keep our niche, a place where theorists and historians seeking to generalize the universal from a singular historical event can be sure to be recognized and promoted.

Selection and combination are difficult. We keep open a flow of unsolicited articles, and I have handled this flow in several ways. In the two-

part “Intellectuals and Social Movements,” I created a topic out of the rich range of essays that had succeeded in getting through the review system. Because, in my view, there are only two or three big problems on the agenda at any one historical moment, this topic has possessed quite a number of authors working in isolation, so I just put them together. I added a series of interviews and created a larger whole than would otherwise have been possible. To attract the attention of other editors and journal lovers, I also experimented with how to build in a logic for each undedicated issue. This makes writing the head note easier. I used to think of these issues as montage, because for me journals are alive and can be read front to back, back to front, or dipped into. Now with electronic access this element of montage and play is not as visible anymore.

Mentorship is one thing that has not fundamentally changed in twenty years. I hope it never does. In the beginning perhaps we mentored one another. However, in the tradition of *Socialist Review* we also made it quite clear that good scholarship is necessarily a communitarian project, for to elude the obvious double binds is to saturate oneself and the author in the traps that superficial “politics” or scholarship can set. Mentoring also has suspended the personality problem, which comes, or rather twenty years ago accompanied, relatively small scholarly communities. In any case, the ability to give intellectual succor and critical response generously to scholars who have good ideas but need time and stimulation has been a characteristic of reviewers for the journal. Of all the work that scholars do, I think reviewing is the most sustainedly generous labor of all. You do not know who wrote the text. You do not know whether, on a dark corner, they would be a friend or foe. However, there is a strong attachment that emerges between author and reviewer when a compatible and deeply critical review relation begins. There are many excellent pieces in the journal’s archive that developed over a matter of years in collaboration with an inspired reviewer.

Karl: In what sense would you say that, over the last two decades, *positions* has led a certain scholarly shift towards theoretically informed work and to what extent has it reflected that shift? In other words, how have you as editor seen your major task: to define a new set of questions or to provide a platform for already-emerging questions to be published? How has this task changed over the last two decades?

Barlow: This is a good question, a historical question. For a historian like me it proposes a dilemma regarding core assumptions about history and how history is made, endured, changed, and so on. So let me begin saying that both philosophically and in my personal memories of early and accumulated editorial experience, I have a record of *anticipating* and opening for debate what are fruitful—which is to say latently existing—theoretically informed problematics. My experience is that *leading* a shift toward theoretically informed work and *creating* the conditions under which this leading is possible are not the same. Further, it is not a question that can be posed as an either-or. I recall vividly feeling, in the first and second years, that I had stepped into a magic place where history had said, okay, make good decisions because this is the right time for this project. Of course, I and most of those who committed early to this work were irritable. I personally had the intention of not following anyone anymore. I had the idea from reading in Republican-era Chinese modern intellectual history and literature that there had to be a better way of understanding intellectuals who might under other conditions have been my own peers. Because the young intellectuals whose work I read seemed peer-like to me and my historical work involved reading theories that people now dead had written in their youth, I wanted to find better ways to examine and analyze their work. Modernization theory, structural functionalism, sociological reductionism, and the cultural theories de rigueur in my graduate school days could not help me.

My commitments to what you term “theoretically informed work” and what I call critical scholarship preexisted my life as an editor. Because I am an intellectual historian and a person committed to philosophy of history, my judgments in collaborative and editorial work mirror my intellectual inclinations. The experience of founding and serving as an editor of a critical scholarly journal taught me (and I wrote about this in the early years of my work) how utterly conditioned even our most original work is. I still teach this to my graduate students. In any contemporary moment there will be only a few core questions to resolve. If you are careful and hard working you will find one and attach to it. The moment of the journal’s founding at the end of the Cold War was how imperialism and particularly the issue word *colonialism* (which in some vocabularies is simply a synonym of imperialism) worked under the Japanese and US empires. How the issues of

colonialism and neocolonialism in contemporary analytical debates worked historically. In my early scholarly work the question was how sexed subjects historically are inspired. That is why I wrote about the subject women in feminism.

Positions also was not my first journal. I grew up in a family where founding a newspaper was done. My father had cofounded a monthly newspaper in Tokyo, and I saw the press where it was published and published my own first writing there in the early 1960s. Later I would found my own throw-away broadsheet at university, written and, of course, edited by my own self, which kept me from mischief in the mid-1960s. As I said before, I also had concrete experience of having guest edited at another scholarly journal around the late 1980s, so this sort of work already had an honorable and comfortable place in my intellectual life.

Over the years and as I have aged, I define coming intellectual trends in several ways. I present papers widely and pay attention to responses; I go to workshops as a guest, read the transcripts of meetings and the AAS annual conference guide; I talk to book editors, colleagues, and students. Because I am an intellectual historian, I lead with ideas, and my personal commitments over the years (literary theory, ideas about anthropology and experience, the feminist theory eruption that would transform social history, Spivakian and Derridian deconstruction, political philosophy) are reflected in my efforts to create a journal that I myself would want to read.

Regarding the “inevitable limitations of the editor,” as Walter Benjamin correctly wrote, perhaps, to paraphrase, she may be allowed a few words to outline her awareness of the boundaries of her own horizons and her readiness to acknowledge them. Like Benjamin whose journal *Angelus Novus* never published anything, I also “make no claim to survey the intellectual horizons of the age from on high,” because while “the editor will feel some affinity with whatever will be found” in the pages of the journal, it is not the editor who creates the truth of situations, but the situations that lend themselves to the skilled editor’s recognition and critique, and reinforcement of contributors’ various expression. To cite the philosopher,

Nothing appears more important to the editor than that the journal should forget all appearance and simply express the truth of the situation,

which is that even the purest will and the most patient labor among the different collaborators will prove unable to create any unity, let alone a community. The journal should proclaim through the mutual alienness of their contributions how impossible it is in our age to give voice to any community—even though this common forum might suggest otherwise—and should make plain to what degree even this connection remains on trial only, while responsibility to substantiate it rests entire with the editor . . . the ephemeral aspect of this journal . . . is the fair price exacted by the journal's call for true contemporary relevance.²

I am the product of theoretically informed historians like Rosalind Coward, Joan Scott, Harry Harootunian, Geof Eley, Robin Collingwood, Donald Lowe, [and] Lata Mani, and my research is similar in nature to their efforts to define newly set questions. But as an editor I have broader responsibilities which have to do with meeting deadlines, recruiting special editors, working with reviewers, and anticipating what will concern our readers two years from now.

The questions I initially thought to ask and probably continue to raise revolve endlessly around the same issues. How is it possible to theorize generally through "Asia"-located singularities? How do encompassing categories work in history, for example, is *semicolonial* a bid to stipulate "not having been colonized" in an otherwise colonial world? But I am not the only scholar working larger questions through the journal form. Why and how, Rich Calichman asked, is Japanese philosophy actually philosophy? How is sexuality as such going to be retheorized through the optic of "Asia," as Yukiko Hanawa asked, offering the metaphor of the circuit. How do researchers approach a crime against humanity, as the "Comfort Women" special-issue contributors debated? How is racialism understood transnationally according to Andrew Jones and Nikhil Singh? When Marxists confront the problem that capitalism is the global and defining commonality of modernity, how are the double binds of difference and specificity in scholarship negotiated, according to Yan Hairong and Daniel F. Vukovich? It is twenty years now, and many scholars like Haiyan Lee, Christopher Lupke, Joan Kee, [and] Tonglin Lu have raised debates as they have encountered them in the course of research.

The changes in what I do have come about because there are more and more “Asianists” and Asia-educated scholars (who may or may not focus primarily on Asia-related topics) who consider theoretical work as legitimate and necessary to scholarship generally speaking. Like the reviewer who awarded our issue on “War Capital Trauma” noted, it is possible now to accept the other theorist, perhaps a theorist from outside of Europe, as a contemporary and an interlocutor. Because we now visit each others’ research and publication sites, translate one another’s work, teach each others’ students, there are simply more people who want to do this kind of work, are allowed or encouraged to expand this generic scholarship of [the] “theoretically informed” genre. And now, of course, *positions* has joined many other scholars and journal projects internationally to support theoretically informed scholarship. One of the final things that I hope I have contributed to this historical situation is to mentor future editors.

Notes

1. See the photograph at *Art: 21* (blog), www.blog.art21.org/2007/08/24/an-my-le-small-wars-at-the-henry-art-gallery/ (accessed September 28, 2011).
2. Walter Benjamin, “Announcement of the Juornal Angelus Novus,” *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 1913–1926, Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996).